

Exploring Connections

Richard III & Looking for Richard



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*'In this elective, students will explore how **meanings** of a pair of texts can be shaped and **reshaped** by considering the nature of the **connections** between them. Exploration of the **connections** between the texts will enhance understanding of the **values** and **contexts** of each text. Relationships between these texts may be implicit or explicit. Connections may be established through direct or indirect references, **contexts**, **values**, **ideas**, and the use of language **forms and features**' (BOS Prescriptions 2009 – 2012).*

HSC Examination Rubric

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of the **meanings** of a pair of texts when considered **together**
- **evaluate** the **relationships** between texts and contexts
- organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form

Connections

- Look through the lens of the doco when you explore the play and make the key connections considering how context shapes and reshapes meaning.



Connections

Shakespeare introduces in the opening scene the mirror as a reflexive metaphor to explore how what we see in the mirror

can be an illusion: *‘But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks / Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass’.*

Pacino represents Richard how others see him, but he is drawn to the dark villain who uses words and actions to hide the ‘shadow’ in the mirror.

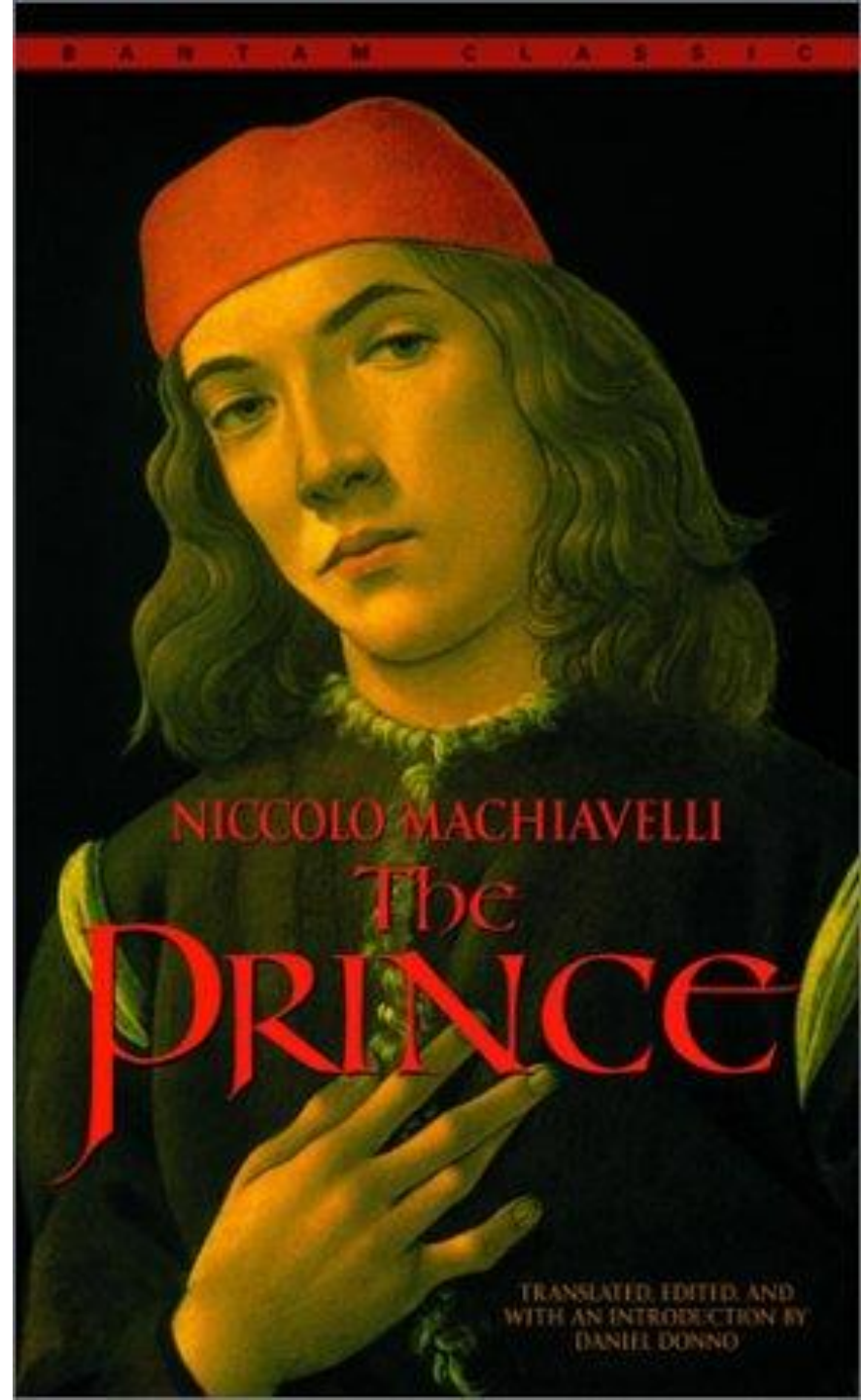
- *‘Man – a being in search of meaning’*
Plato.
- What do the texts tell you about the human experience?

- ALL texts reflect the values and context of the time of production.
- Each composer is influenced (either implicitly or explicitly) by their respective contexts which affects WHY and HOW they explore characters, themes and values.
- HOW does Shakespeare SHAPE certain characters, ideas and values through his play, and how and why does Pacino RESHAPE these aspects?
- In RESHAPING Shakespeare's play which scenes does Pacino focus on and why?

Context

Richard III

- **Political stability following a period of unrest and threats to the throne:** As well as being politically correct in its support of the reigning Tudors, the play written in the Elizabethan period would have captured the imagination of an audience aware of the ongoing political tension and intrigue
- **Theatre:** The cultural and political role of theatre to spread Protestantism and royalist propaganda through a divided realm further reflects the intent of *Richard III* that supports the political rights of the Tudors and maligns Richard III and the House of York.



Context

Richard III

- **Machiavellian politics:** Machiavelli's view of politics and power (*The Prince* (1513) represents a humanist move towards a secular notion of leadership. Richard III rejects traditional Christian virtues and morality to pursue at any cost personal power and uses language as a persuasive weapon. '*Politics have no relation to morals.*'
- **Morality Plays and The Vice:** Although the character of Richard III has its origins in the Vice as he reminds the audience – '*Thus like the formal Vice, Iniquity, / I moralize two meanings in one word*' - he is more subtle and human. His actions rather than his nature are evil.



Context

- **Secularism and free will vs. providentialism:** Move from traditional Christian ideology of morality, the belief in a spiritual order and the power of 'divine retribution'
- Shakespeare's times reflect a shift from humanity's unquestioned relationship with God to a more secular exploration and fascination of what it is to be an individual with free will.



Context

- *Looking for Richard* released in 1996 for a modern American audience who were skeptical about the relevance of his plays and confused by the complexity of the language.
- Kevin Kline in the documentary states '*An English teacher brought us to a local production of 'King Lear' and after ten minutes of people doing "Shakespearean acting", I tuned out and started making out with my girlfriend in the back row. We left at intermission.*'



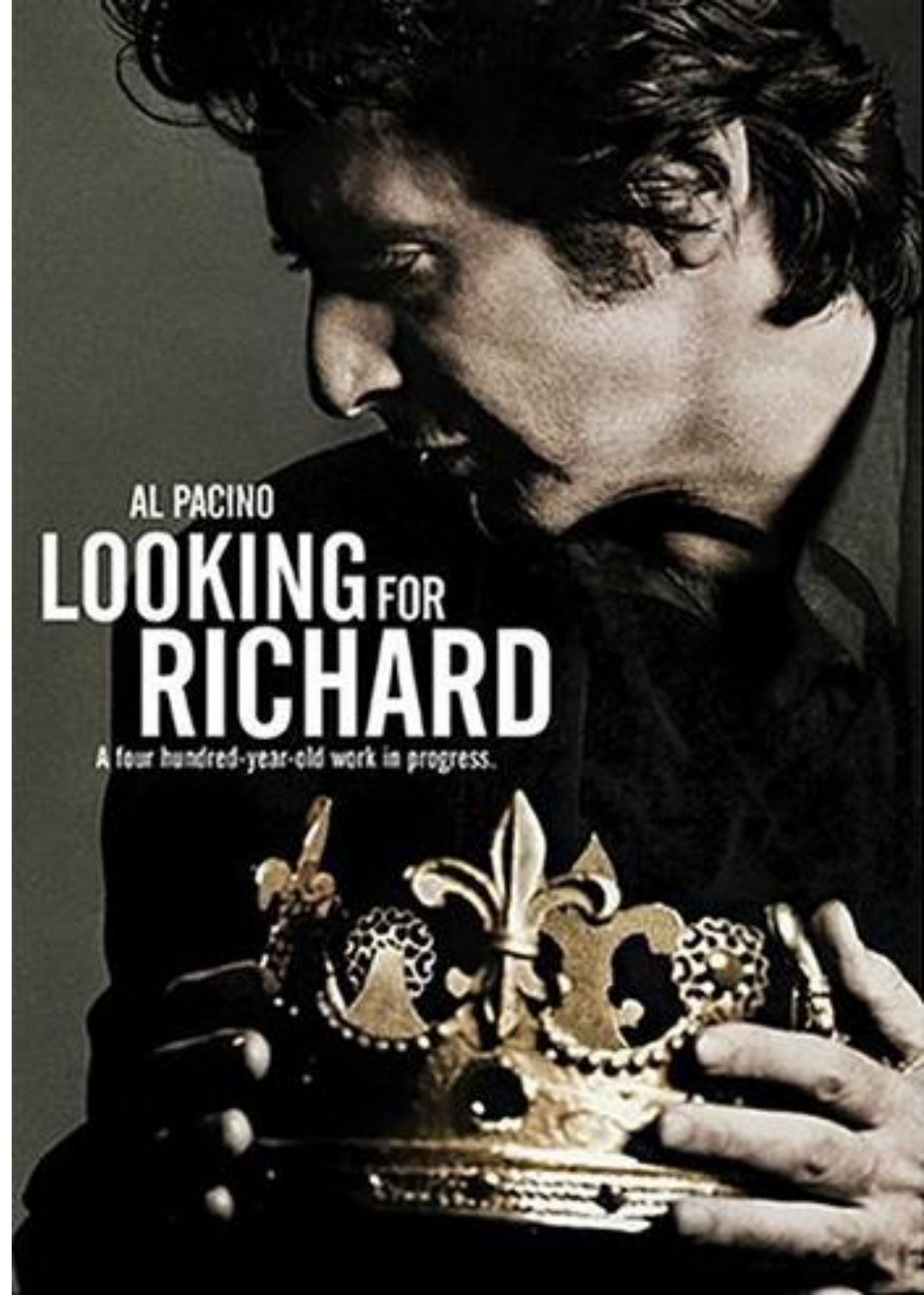
Context

- 20th century: advent of totalitarianism - Richard carrying a riding crop is symbolic of his autocratic power.
- *We must find in it the night of Nazi occupation, concentration camps, mass murders'* J. Kott
- Pacino's past gangster films have influenced his representation of Richard's villainy.



Context

- The establishing sequence juxtaposes panning shots of a cathedral representative of an English tradition and history that Shakespeare has come from, with a wide shot of the American high-rise city, urban landscape and the basketball court symbolic of US contemporary culture and values.





Values

Moderation
Honesty

Integrity
Loyalty

Compassion
Justice

Connections

Audience & Purpose

- ***Richard III***: Entertain through an enigmatic villain and provoke thought about what it is to be human.
- Affirming to a Elizabethan audience of the emergent middle class and the nobility the Tudor's legitimate right to the throne. Richmond who defeats Richard at the Battle of Bosworth and becomes king of a united England was Henry Tudor, the great-grandfather of Elizabeth 1, the ruling monarch when this play was performed.



Connections

Form

- *Richard III*: Historical tragedy continuing the story from *Henry VI Part III* and concluding the historical tetralogy that began with *Richard II*.
- The play's rising action builds to the moment when Richard is crowned king and then rapidly falls with Richard descending into darker deeds and others deserting him until the final battle scene where he is killed and Richmond triumphs.
- 'As soon as he gets what he wants...the emptiness.'



Connections

Form

- ***Looking for Richard***: Stream-of-consciousness 'drama' documentary
- The documentary's structure sequentially follows the narrative of *Richard III* so that the viewer is guided through the plot, reminded of the importance of the play and follows Richard's escalating evil deeds.
- The documentary is a deliberate pastiche of cuts from interviews with actors and scholars juxtaposed with impromptu vox pops with people on the streets of New York City to demonstrate that Shakespeare can reach everyone and belongs to the actors.



Reshaping

King Richard III

- Meta-theatrical historiography
- Richards' meta-theatrical role as conducting a "*direful pageant*" playing a range of roles from loving brother, desperate lover, benevolent statesman and protector of the crown.

Looking for Richard

- Meta-documentary
- Pacino's role as director and actor merge
- He controls artistically the representation and the content
- Pacino's pageant is 'insubstantial' as his film is never made - '*We're never going to finish making this movie.*'

Connections

Artistry

- The power of Shakespeare's language: the nuances, lyricism, the delicious irony, powerful rhetoric, clever word play and dramatic techniques.
- In *Looking for Richard*, when the actors discuss the ambiguity and complexity of the lines in the play and how they should interpret these lines they convey the duality of both the magnetism and refutation of Shakespeare's artistry.



Connections

Artistry

- Vanessa Redgrave speaks lyrically of the power and emotion of Shakespeare's use of language – 'the beauty, depth, passion, music of his words.' The African American speaks eloquently about how words today have lost their meaning and feeling, 'If we felt what we said, and say less we'd mean more.'



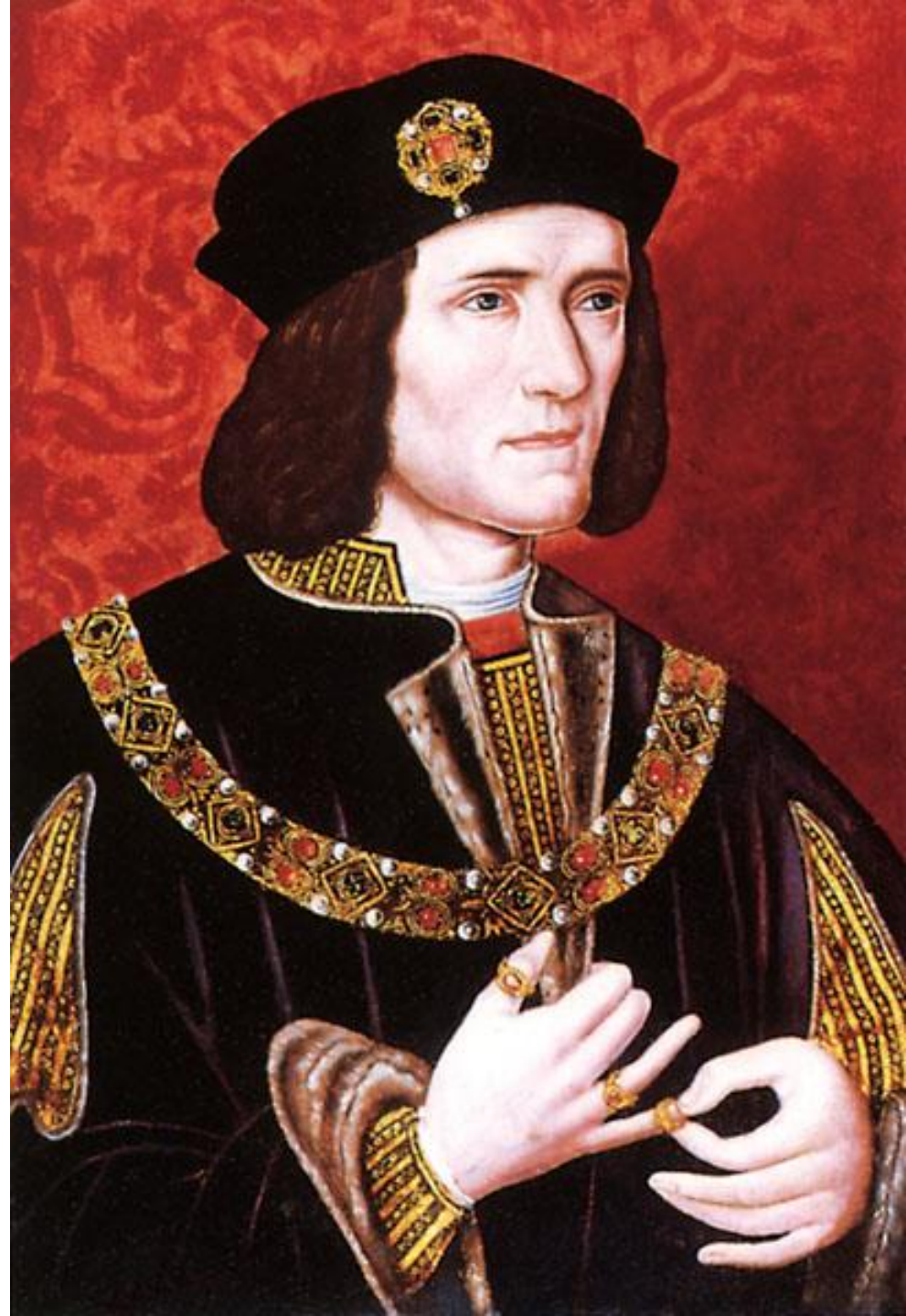
Richard

- *‘Already in this play he is thinking about human beings as actors and about the stage.’*
- Shakespeare has moved away from the creation of stereotypes that the Elizabethan audience were familiar with in the Christian Morality plays to create characters that are more human.



Richard

- Like Pacino, we are fascinated by the compelling, unscrupulous Richard III who seduces us through his soliloquies and asides to be co-conspirators.
- *'This guy Richard...make up your mind...what is he? First you say he's a kind of devil, then you say he's a kind of mad court jester. Then, he's a dead ringer for a kind of medieval Vice. Whatever that is? And then he's described as some sort of scourge of god or Machiavelli...'*



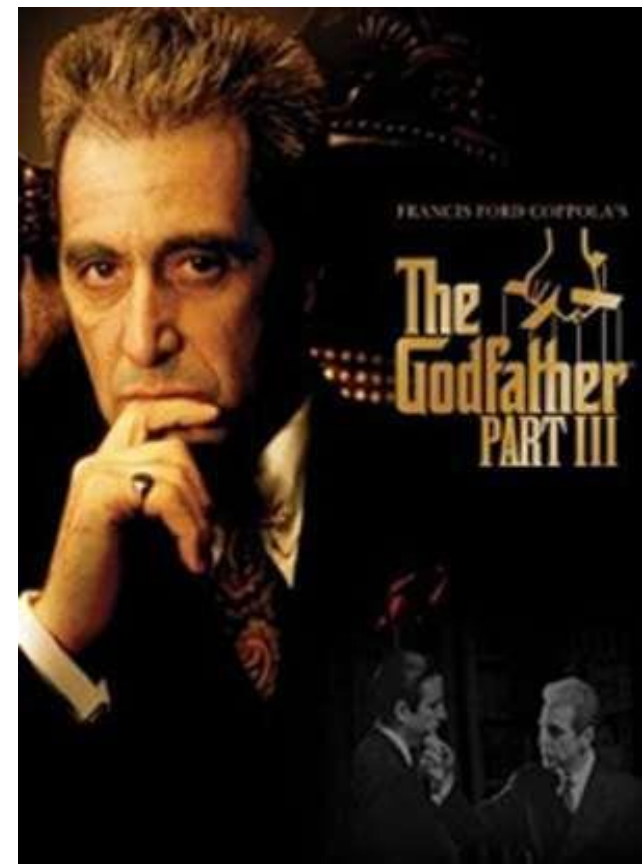
Richard

- Vice who entertains the audience with his villainy and sardonic humour.
- Deformity was synonymous with God punishing evil
- Machiavel who subscribes to the philosophy that “the ends justifies the means” and in the pursuit and retention of power suspends morality.
- “*dissembling*” mask of Vice stripped from Richard to reveal the profanity of his actions.



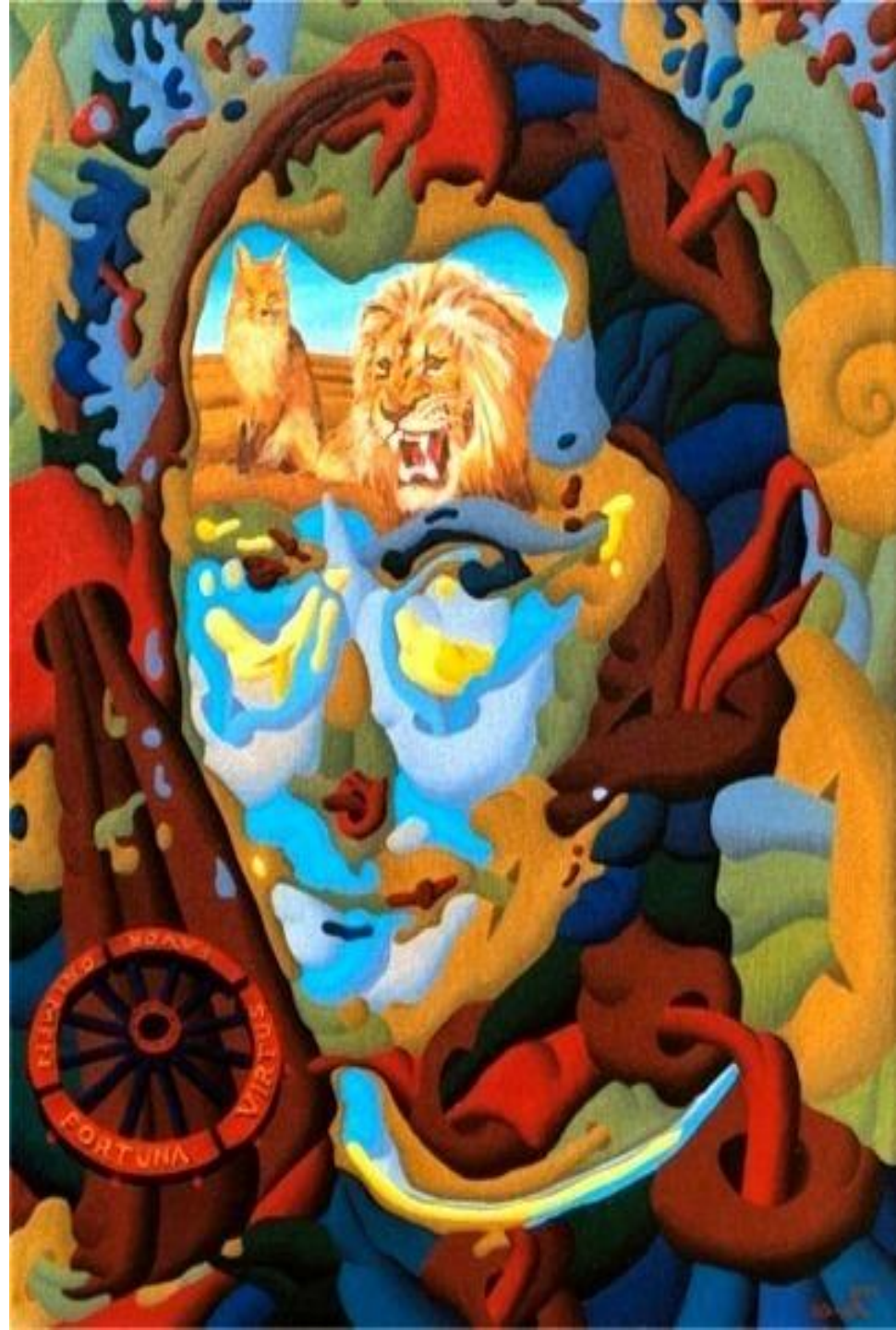
Richard

- Pacino more interested in power and politics, manipulation and deceit than moral dilemma of embracing power.
- Mafioso malevolence
- Reflects Hollywood's obsession with the dark villain.



Richard

- Pacino's reshaping:
 - Invited reading as a seductive villain BUT ignores the complexities
 - Deformed metaphorically symbolising his evil
 - Chiaroscuro lighting and gaze: the enigma
 - Driven by ambition and power
 - Cleverly reads and manipulates others





The Ideas

Human frailty

- Pacino chooses to feature at length the scenes from the play that reveal humanity's flaws such as the seduction of Lady Anne and the murder of Clarence.
- *'Let's get this right, this guy Gloucester, has killed Anne's husband and father-in-law and the father-in-law's body starts to bleed when he comes by and he still manages to win the girl?'*



Complicity

- *'It is double pleasure to deceive the deceiver.'*
- The moral weakness of the other characters enable Richard to succeed.
- Brackenbury's inaction, *'I will not reason what is meant hereby, / Because I will be guiltless of the meaning'* (A1, siv).
- The Archbishop is persuaded by Richard to hand the young princes over to him removing the protection of the church.
- *"He can use the fear, the general turmoil to his advantage. He knows these people hate each other. He'll use their hatred to manipulate them"* (Pacino).



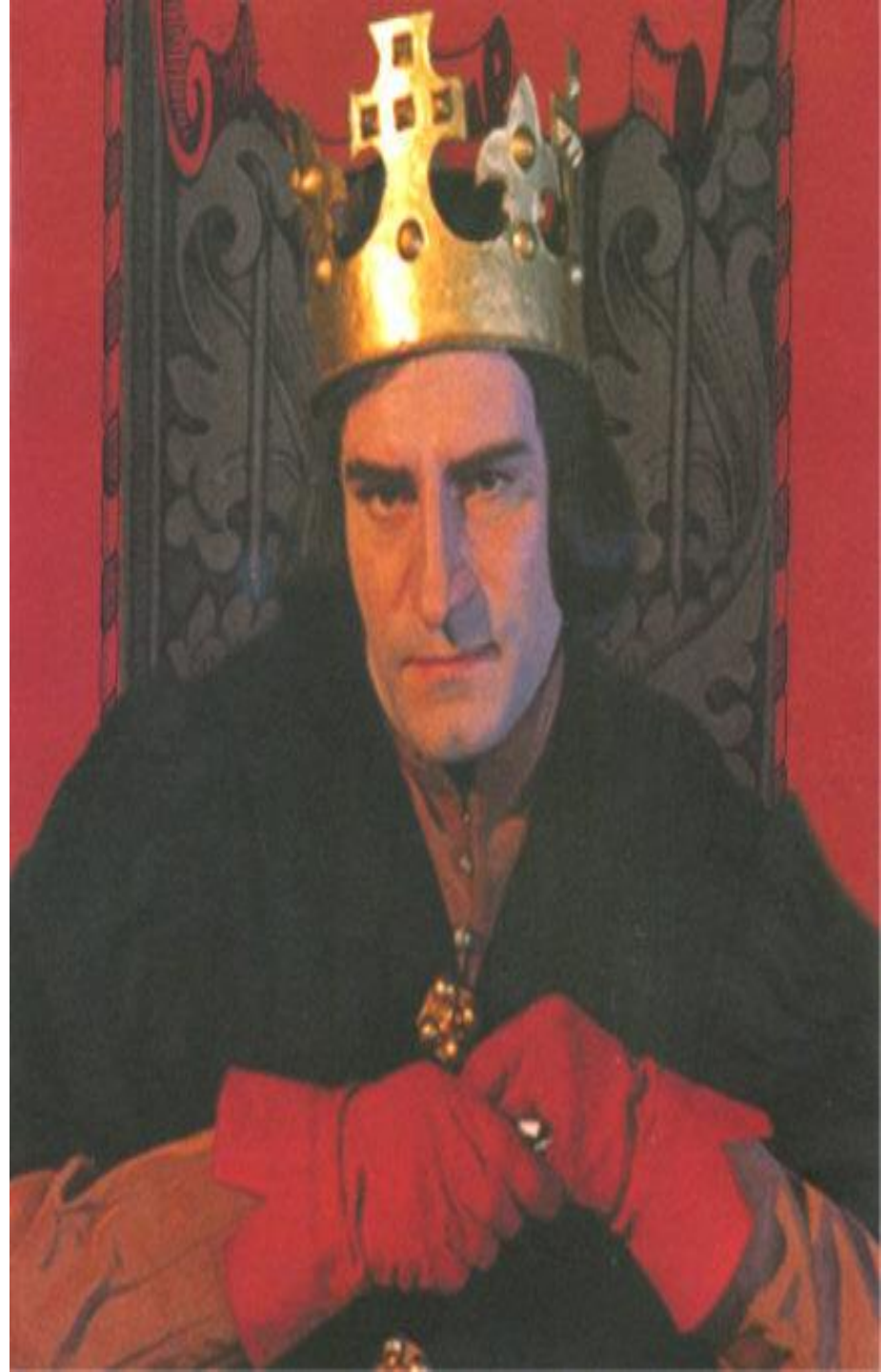
Duplicity

- Richard is only honest with the audience informing them of his plans and celebrating his success. He uses irony skillfully to hide his ruthlessness and lack of conscience. Even after all of the bloody deeds he is able to convince the people, albeit for a brief time, to support him.
- As one actor observes in *Looking for Richard* ‘So now all that’s left is winning the people!’ Pacino sings gleefully ‘He’s got the whole
- “They canvas like politicians, complete with lies and innuendo. world in his hands!” (Pacino)



Pursuit of Power

- *“The truth is that those in power have total contempt for everything they promise, everything they pledge, and this is really what Shakespeare’s great play is really about.”*
- In the 21st century the pursuit of power is still a concern; thus, providing one explanation for the continuing resonance of *King Richard III* and Pacino’s fascination.



Ambition

- Elizabethan times:
Machiavelli, Catholicism,
political unrest
- US: cynicism and loss of trust
in the government
- Pacino's ambition: *"Our revels
now are ended. These our
actors,
As I foretold you, were all
spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin
air:
And, like the baseless fabric of
this vision... This insubstantial
pageant"*



Ambition

- ‘What, do you tremble? Are you all afraid? /Alas, I blame you not, for you are mortal...’ (A1, s.ii)
- The actors in *Looking for Richard* are fascinated by the battle for power and the hatred that is palpable – ‘They are clawing at each other for the throne!’
- ‘The gathering of the Dons in this room.’ *Looking for Richard* makes the connection between Elizabethan times and today stressing that there will always be individuals who will betray others for power.
- The end justifies the means.



Ambition

- *'There is no creature loves me, / And if I die no soul shall pity me.'* (Av, siii) – The terrible consequences of suppressing your humanity for power. His villains die alone and without respect or love. Pacino observes that Richard 'has no friends.'
- *"But he has let the pursuit of power totally corrupt him. He is alienated from his own body and his own self"* (Kimble).
- Pacino ambitiously pursues creating the film of the play without considering the challenges.



Conscience

- *"Conscience is but a word that cowards use, devised at first to keep the strong in awe."*
- Even at the end when Richard has been confronted by the ghosts of those he killed and betrayed he exclaims *'O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me?'* (Av, siii) He does not seek salvation.
- Shakespeare explores how individuals can ignore their conscience and commit evil such as the murderers of Clarence who hesitate only for a moment before taking his life or Buckingham who supports Richard until he makes that mistake of having to consider whether he supports the murder of the two young princes – *'He did all the dirty work and propped up the king.'*



Morality

- ***RIII***: Women are crucial in foreshadowing events and as the voice of morality proclaiming Richard's evil and his pre-destined fate.



Morality/Providence

- Vice character that satirised women as a means of highlighting his genius and draw in the audience.
- Contextual construct of the Three Mary's of the resurrection plays who represent the central mystery of Christianity and predestination
- Anne, the Duchess and Elizabeth as the forces of predestination, fate and divine retribution against Richard's sacrilegious actions.



Providence

- The women shift audience sympathy from Richard by showing the anguish his evil causes on a personal level. They are Richard's victims and the voice of pre-destiny.
- Margaret has a Nemesis choric function, her curses foreshadowing the divine retribution of pre-destiny for Richard as "*the troubler of the poor world's peace*"



Reshaping

- Pacino addresses the role of women more obliquely as the doco is centred on affirming Pacino's views upon the validity of method acting and Shakespeare's place as the actor's heritage as well as the importance of the villain to modern audiences.



Reshaping

- Pacino's Richard is and Vice and a Machiavel, with sexual power replacing humour and wit, a context more accessible for modern responders. *"I'll have her, but I will not keep her long".*
- Kimball establishes Pacino's authority, interrupting Ryder in the actors' workshop to mock her interpretation. Side lighting, camera angles turning away, and editing reinforces Anne/Ryder as subservient to Richard/Pacino



Communication

- Reach, educate and challenge an audience.
- Consider the enablers.
- The power of language to:
 - Evoke feelings
 - Persuade
 - Manipulate
 - Deceive



Communication

- *'How do you communicate Shakespeare to an American audience?'*
- Educate, inform and connect
- *"We could communicate both our passions for it, out understanding that we come to..."*
- *'Through the pentameter of the soul'*
- *'He can use the fear...'*



Communication

- Entertain through an enigmatic villain and provoke thought about what it is to be human.
- Question the beliefs of the times: determinism or providentialism vs. free will, humanism and secularism.
- Affirm to a Elizabethan audience of the emergent middle class and the nobility the Tudor's legitimate right to the throne.



Communication

- How: dramatic, filmic and language features
- Cinema verite
- Pastiche
- Tension and conflict
- Lyricism and nuances
 - *'the beauty, depth, passion, music of his words.'*
- Irony and wit

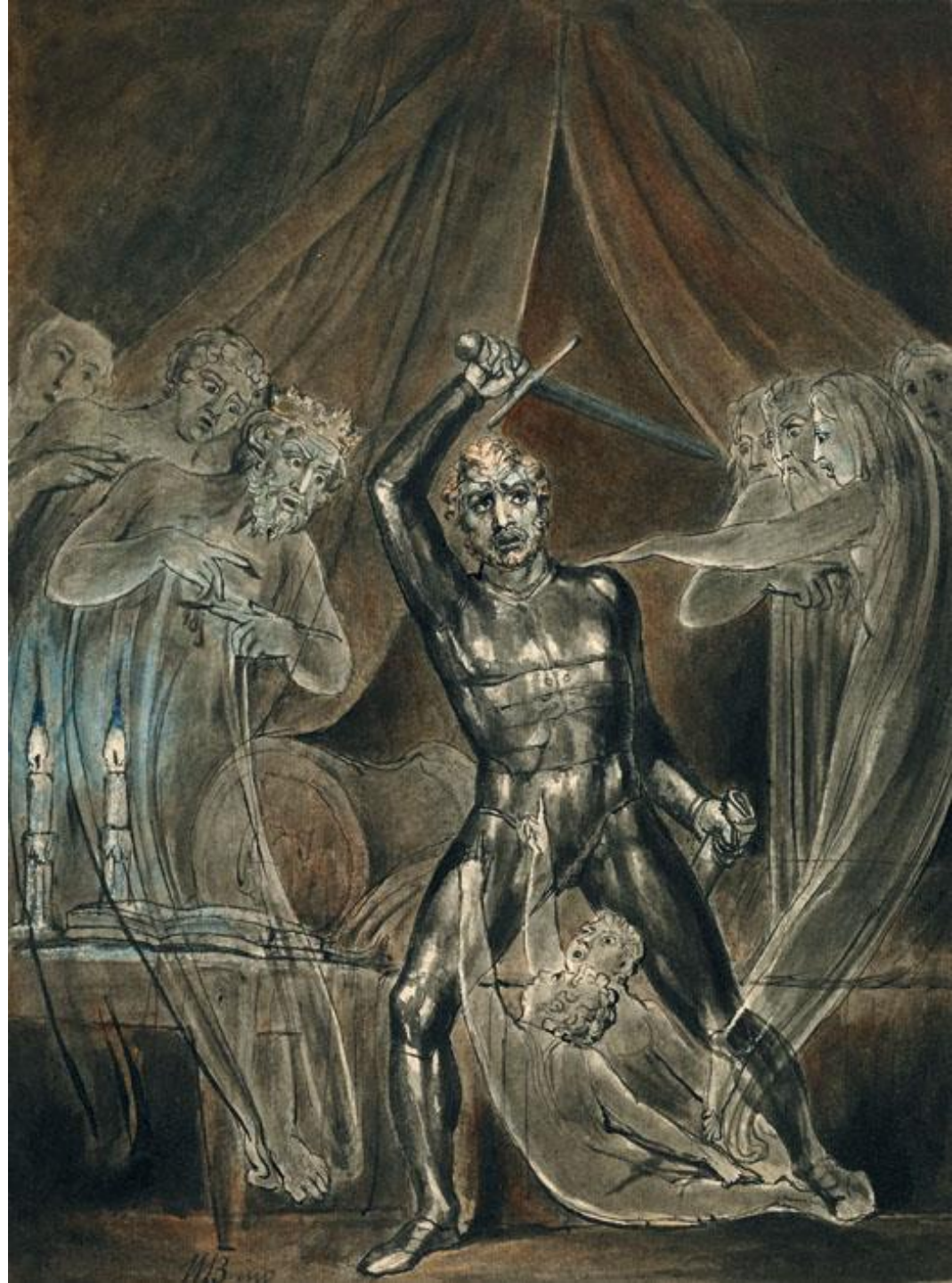


Notes from the Marking Centre

- *Candidates who clearly understood the purpose of their texts were able to demonstrate **conceptual understanding** and respond personally.*
- *High-range responses used key terms particular to their **focus area** to create their own thesis, and displayed an ability to evaluate and analyse.*
- *Better responses developed a thesis which demonstrated a strong **conceptual understanding** of the module and the elective.*
- *Better responses introduced a thesis to answer the question in their introduction and maintained and supported it throughout the essay.*

Approach

- A line of argument that responds to the question and presents your point of view.
- Two supporting ideas.
- Facilitates integration of texts
- Developed and supported by judicious textual support



Theses

- *Looking for Richard* connects the audience to Shakespeare through the exploration of the enigmatic Richard III.



James W Bell 17/7/08

Theses

- Both *Richard III* and *Looking for Richard* are products of different times yet they are connected through their exploration of what it is to be human.



Theses

- While the context, language and form have changed, Richard III and Looking for Richard are connected through the core value of moderation.



Theses

- *Looking for Richard* reconnects us with Shakespeare's characters, values and themes reminding us that they are timeless. We can look for Richard, and find him, in the world around us.



Shakespeare and Pacino ground the evil of Richard differently in their respective texts. Shakespeare's Richard is not merely an ambitious villain, but the personification of a metaphysical evil – a Machiavellian prince whose vice-like character is derived from the medieval morality play. These attributes manifest themselves in Richard's deformity – part of a religious paradigm whose didactic purpose would not have been lost on an Elizabethan audience. However, broad contextual shifts have resulted in Pacino downplaying the significance of Richard's deformity in his adaption. Instead, the director attempts to recreate a villain for our times, emphasising mainly the political characteristics of a tyrant-king rendered recognisable to a modern audience.